

Message Text

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USMISSION USNATO
DIA WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 29746

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, FR
SUBJECT: SOCIALISM IN FRENCH COLORS -- ANOTHER STEP
FORWARD?

SUMMARY. THE NEWEST ADDITION TO THE PCF LIBRARY AP-
PEARED SEPTEMBER 4: "THE USSR AND US." WRITTEN BY FIVE
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COMMUNIST INTELLECTUALS AND ENDORSED BY THE POLITBURO,
THE BOOK QUESTIONS THE INFALLIBILITY OF MARX AND LENIN
AND NOTES THAT EVEN MAURICE THOREZ MAY HAVE ONCE MADE
AN ERROR. THIS IS THE FIRST SERIOUS EFFORT TO DO WHAT
PCF INTELLECTUAL JEAN ELLEINSTEIN HAS URGED: PUSH THE
22ND CONGRESS LINE -- SOCIALISM IN FRENCH COLORS --
TO ITS LOGICAL CONCLUSION OF CATEGORICAL REJECTION OF

THE SOVIET MODEL. IDEOLOGICAL FIREWORKS ASIDE -- TRIAL BALLONS ALSO INCLUDE THE POSSIBLE REHABILITATION OF TROTSKY AND BUKHARIN -- "THE USSR AND US" HARDLY THROWS THE USSR INTO THE SAME PURGATORY AS THOSE IN THE CAPITALIST WORLD; NOR DOES IT EVEN TOUCH ON THE ELLEINSTEIN PLEA FOR GREATER INTERNAL DEMOCRACY IN THE PCF. IN EVALUATING USSR/PCF RELATIONS UNTIL 1968 (NEATLY AVOIDING THE MARCHAIS ERA), THE BOOK FINDS ENOUGH POTENTIAL FAULTS TO JUSTIFY THE CONCLUSION THAT THERE ARE NO MODELS FOR FRENCH SOCIALISM. HOWEVER, IT IS STILL A FAR CRY FROM ELLEINSTEIN'S THESIS OF THE USSR AS "ANTI-MODEL." ALTHOUGH CAVEATS ABOUND (DIFFICULT INTERNATIONAL SITUATION, ETC.) AND A QUESTION MARK FOLLOWS EACH CRITICISM, "THE USSR AND US" OPENS THE WAY FOR A WIDER DEBATE WHICH SOME INTELLECTUALS ARE SURE TO PURSUE IN PREPARATION FOR THE 23RD CONGRESS. IN THE NEAR-TERM, THIS TYPE OF INITIATIVE, AS SHALLOW AS IT MAY PROVE TO BE, ALLOWS THE PCF LEADERSHIP TO NURTURE AN IMAGE OF IDEOLOGICAL PROGRESS AT A TIME WHEN ITS POLITICAL STRATEGY IS MORE CONSERVATIVE THAN EVER. END SUMMARY.

1. SOCIALISM IN FRENCH COLORS: ON ONE IMPORTANT QUESTION AT LEAST, BOTH PCF LEADERSHIP AND DISSENTING ELEMENTS OF THE PARTY CLEARLY AGREE: THE CORRECT STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE IS THE ONE DEFINED IN 1976 AT THE 22ND CONFIDENTIAL

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PARTY CONGRESS -- SOCIALISM IN FRENCH COLORS. THE DEFINITION EXISTS, HOWEVER, ONLY IN THE NEGATIVE SENSE, I.E., IN REJECTING ALL HISTORICAL MODELS IN FAVOR OF A PURELY FRENCH SOLUTION. LACKING A POSITIVE CONCEPTION OF THIS YET-TO-BE-INVENTED BRAND OF "DEMOCRATIC" SOCIALISM, COMMUNIST INTENTIONS CAN ONLY BE MEASURED BY THE CREDIBILITY OF THE PCF'S DENUNCIATION OF EXISTING SOCIALIST MODELS, PARTICULARLY THE SOVIET EXPERIENCE SO REVERED FOR SO LONG. IT IS ON THIS ISSUE OF CREDIBILITY THAT PCF DISSENT MARKS ONE OF ITS FIRST OBJECTIONS: A FRENCH SOLUTION IS POSSIBLE, SAYS PARTY HISTORIAN JEAN ELLEINSTEIN, ONLY WHEN THE PCF HAS GONE TO THE LOGICAL CONCLUSION OF A "RADICAL CRITICISM" OF SO-CALLED SOCIALIST EXPERIENCES TO DATE.

2. THE PCF LEADERSHIP HAS NO DOUBT SHARED AT LEAST PART OF ELLEINSTEIN'S ANALYSIS FOR SOME TIME; THE ELECTORAL INCONVENIENCES OF BEING ASSOCIATED WITH STALINISM, THE INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA, ETC., ARE SIMPLY TOO OBVIOUS TO BE IGNORED. YET THE PCF HAS TRADITIONALLY CONFINED ITS CRITIQUE OF BOTH THE USSR AND OF STANDARD MARXIST DOGMA TO THE BARE MINIMUM, MEANWHILE WATCHING

ITS ITALIAN AND SPANISH COMRADES PUSH AHEAD WITH MORE
DARING IDEOLOGICAL FORAYS. THE SEPTEMBER PUBLICATION OF
"THE USSR AND US" BY FIVE COMMUNIST INTELLECTUALS, WITH
POLITBURO BLESSING, MARKS THE FIRST SERIOUS PCF EFFORT
TO MOVE THE IDEOLOGICAL DEBATE IN FRANCE OFF DEAD

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CENTER.

3. DOCTRINE, OF COURSE, DOES NOT EVOLVE IN THE PCF. RA-

THER IT IS DICTATED FROM ABOVE, ADVANCING IN GREAT LEAPS
FORWARD (WITNESS THE REJECTION OF THE DICTATORSHIP OF
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THE PROLETARIAT, THE ACCEPTANCE OF EUROPE AND THE FRENCH
NUCLEAR FORCE). THE "USSR AND US" IS ANOTHER
EXAMPLE OF SUCH CO-OPTATION, ALTHOUGH ITS POTENTIAL
IDEOLOGICAL MODIFICATIONS ARE UNLIKELY TO BOTHER
ANYONE EXCEPT SOME OF THE OLD GUARD. IN LAUNCHING A
NUMBER OF TRIAL BALLOONS, THE PARTY LEADERSHIP IS AP-
ARENTLY DEMONSTRATING THAT IT IS WILLING TO BE FLEXI-
BLE ON SOME ISSUES DURING THE 23RD CONGRESS, AT LEAST
AS LONG AS THESE ISSUES DO NOT THREATEN THE PCF APPARA-
TUS AND THE POLITBURO'S CONTROL OF THE PROCESS OF CHAN-
GE.

SOME OF THE MORE INTERESTING PROPOSALS INCLUDE THE FOL-
LOWING:

- MARX AND LENIN WERE NO MORE INFALLIBLE THAN
OTHER "GREAT THINKERS";
- THE IDEAS OF TROTSKY AND BUKHARIN, LIKE THOSE
OF ROSA LUXEMBOURG AND GRAMSCI, DESERVE MORE
ATTENTION, "WITHOUT LOSING OUR SENSE OF CRITI-
CISM";
- MAURICE THOREZ, EVEN THOUGH OPERATING UNDER
REAL CONSTRAINTS OF HIS ERA, MAY HAVE BEEN
WRONG IN NOT FULLY EXPOSING THE REVELATIONS OF
THE CPSU'S 20TH CONGRESS;
- THE PCF WAS INSUFFICIENTLY PREPARED TO "SEIZE
ALL THE ANTIMONOPOLY AND DEMOCRATIC COMPONENTS
OF THE EVENTS OF MAY-JUNE 1968."

4. EXCEPT IN SETTING A PRECEDENT FOR SELF-CRITICISM
WHICH COULD SOME DAY GET OUT OF HAND, THESE ARE NOT
THREATENING REVELATIONS TO CURRENT PARTY LEADERSHIP.
THEY ADDRESS NO PCF ACTIVITIES AFTER MARCHAIS' RISE
TO POWER, THEY HAVE NO RELEVANCE TO POLITICAL TACTICS
IN 1978 OR EVEN FOR LONG-TERM STRATEGY AND THEY DO NOT
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QUESTION THE PCF'S ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE WHICH MUST
HAVE ALLOWED SUCH ERRORS TO PERSIST THROUGH ALL THESE
YEARS. BUT WHEN THE PCF DECIDES TO GO PUBLIC WITH THIS
SORT OF OPERATION, THERE ARE OBVIOUSLY SOME POSITIVE PO-
LITICAL REASONS. SEVERAL MOTIVATING FACTORS ARE POS-
SIBLE:

- WHILE CURRENT STRATEGY REMAINS CONSERVATIVE

TO THE CORE, A BIT OF IDEOLOGICAL FIREWORKS
HELPS TO DISPEL THE IMAGE OF RETROGRESSION AND
INERTIA WHICH HAS DEVELOPED SINCE THE ELEC-
TIONS;

-- THE PCF LEADERSHIP NEEDS TO STAY OUT-FRONT IN
THE DEFENSE OF THE 22ND CONGRESS LINE; THE
THESIS THAT THERE ARE NO "MASTER THINKERS" IS
A NOVEL WAY OF ARGUING THAT ONLY MODERN DAY
FRENCHMEN CAN DEFINE MODERN DAY SOCIALIST SOLU-
TIONS;

-- DISSENTING ELEMENTS, HAVING ACHIEVED A CERTAIN
RESONANCE IN THE PARTY, CAN BEST BE DISARMED BY
A CAREFULLY ORCHESTRATED OFFENSIVE, CAMOUFLAG-
ING THE LEADERSHIP'S RETREAT ON POLITICAL TAC-
TICS BEHIND A "PROGRESSIVE" STANCE IDEOLOGI-
CALLY.

5. EXACT MOTIVATION MAY NEVER BE KNOWN, BUT THE PCF HAS

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EFFECTIVELY THROWN OUT SOME BONES TO THOSE CRITICS BOTH
WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE PARTY WHO HAVE ARGUED FOR MODER-
NIZATION IN STRUCTION AND DOCTRINE. NEITHER CAN THE
PERSONALITY FACTOR IN THIS OPERATION BE ENTIRELY IGNO-
RED. AS LEADING SPOKESMAN ON BEHALF "THE USSR AND US",
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PAUL LAURENT HAS ONCE AGAIN SURFACED AS THE LEADER-
SHIP'S NUMBER ONE DEFENDER OF "LIBERAL" IDEAS. HIS
OWN BOOK, "THE PCF AS IT IS", IS ALREADY BEING TOUTED
AS A BASIC PRIMER FOR THE 23RD CONGRESS. IN IT, LAURENT
LARGELY DEFENDS EXISTING PCF STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION,
BUT HE DOES RESPOND PARTIALLY TO ONE OF THE DISSENTER'S
MAIN OBJECTIONS IN SUPPORTING THE "PERFECTION" OF DEMO-
CRATIC CONTRALISM. HOW ACTIVELY LAURENT IS ACTUALLY
PUSHING A NEW LINE IS UNCLEAR, BUT HE IS
UNQUESTIONABLY BECOMING THE POLITBURO SYMBOL FOR LIBE-
RALISM.

6. AS FOR "THE USSR AND US", IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN
WHETHER OR NOT THIS REVISED ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL EVENTS
PORTENDS MORE IMPORTANT CHANGES IN PCF ORGANIZATION
AND STRATEGY FOR TODAY. THE HARD FACTS OF THE MATTER ARE
THAT CURRENT BEHAVIOR -- THE WAY IN WHICH DECISIONS ARE
MADE, INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY, PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL
LIFE, ETC., -- IS A BETTER GUIDE TO PCF INTENTIONS THAN
IS THE PROCESS OF REWRITING HISTORY. THE PUBLICATION OF
"THE USSR AND US" IS AT LEAST A RECOGNITION ON THE PART
OF COMMUNIST LEADERS THAT CHANGE IS INEVITABLE, THAT
EVEN THE PCF NEEDS A BREATH OF FRESH AIR NOW AND AGAIN.
IT IS ALSO FURTHER DEMONSTRATION THAT ANY CHANGE IN THE
PCF WILL BE RIGOROUSLY CONTROLLED, AS ALWAYS, BY THE
HIGHEST ECHELONS OF COMMUNIST MACHINERY WHICH CAREFULLY
MANEUVER THE RANK AND FILE ONTO THE CHOSEN ROUTE. IN
THAT SENSE, "THE USSR AND US," LIKE OTHER APPARENT
REVERSALS OF FIELD IN THE PAST, IS PRIMARILY A TAC-
TICAL MANEUVER BY PCF LEADERS, ONE WHICH MAY OR MAY
NOT BE GRADUALLY ABSORBED INTO THE FOUNDATIONS OF COM-
MUNIST THINKING.
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Message Attributes

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